

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4136
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18.03.2020**

EXTENSION OF RAILWAY LINE FROM THENI TO LOWER CAMP

4136. ADV. DEAN KURIAKOSE:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has received any proposal for the extension of railway line from Theni to Lower Camp in Tamil Nadu;**
- (b) if so, the details thereof;**
- (c) the present status of Sabari Rail project in Kerala; and**
- (d) the time by which the said project is likely to be completed?**

ANSWER

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

(SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4136 BY ADV. DEAN KURIAKOSE TO BE ANSWERED IN LOK SABHA ON 18.03.2020 REGARDING EXTENSION OF RAILWAY LINE FROM THENI TO LOWER CAMP

(a) and (b): Proposal/requests/representations from State Governments or various public representatives and other organisations for Railway works/projects are received at Divisional Offices, Zonal Offices and in the Ministry from time to time. As receipt of such proposal is a continuous and dynamic process and is spread over different departments and offices, compendium of such proposals is not maintained.

However, Survey for a new line from Dindigul to Kumuli (Lower camp) via Theni (123 Km) has been completed in 2014. The project could not be taken forward being financially unviable. Another survey for Dindigul-Sabrimala (201 Km) new Broad Gauge (BG) line has been sanctioned in 2016-17. Survey has been taken up. Proposed alignment will pass through Theni and Lower camp area. Further consideration will be possible once survey report is finalised and results thereon are firmed up.

Budget Allocation (for the projects falling fully/partly in the state of Tamil Nadu)

Average annual Budget Allocation for Infrastructure & Safety works, falling fully/partly in State of Tamil Nadu, has been increased to ₹1,979 crore, during 2014-19 from ₹879 crore during 2009-14. Thus, the average annual budget allocation for 2014-19 is 125% more than average annual Budget allocation during 2009-14.

Total Budget Estimate (BE) outlay for Infrastructure and Safety works, falling fully/partly in State of Tamil Nadu, in 2019-2020 is ₹2,410 crore, which is 174% more than of the average annual Budget outlay of 2009-14.

Commissioning of Projects (falling fully/partly in State of Tamil Nadu)

During 2009-14, 923 Km (101 Km New line, 595 Km Gauge conversion and 227 Km Doubling) projects, falling fully/partly in State of Tamil Nadu have been commissioned at an average rate of 185 Km per year.

During 2014-19, 765 Km (326 Km Gauge conversion and 439 Km Doubling) projects falling fully/partly in State of Tamil Nadu have been commissioned at an average rate of 153 Km per year.

(c) and (d): Angamali-Sabarimala new rail line (116 Km) was included in Budget in 1997-98 at a cost of ₹550 crore. Against this, part estimate for long lead items amounting to ₹517.70 crore including ₹58.76 crore as the land cost of the entire project, was sanctioned in May, 2006.

The 5 km section of this project was passing through Periyar Tiger Reserve Forest. On the request of State Government, the project was terminated at Erumeli due to reserve forest area.

Alignment of the project passes through three Districts i.e. Ernakulam, Idukki and Kottayam districts. Final location survey (FLS) for Angamali-Kaladi-Ramapuram section (70 Km) has been completed

in 2002 and further survey in the Kottayam district was stopped by local people in 2007 due to objections on alignment.

Consequently, in this project, work on Angamali-Kaladi (7 Km) and long lead works on Kaladi-Perumbavoor (10 Km) have been taken up. However, further works on this project could not be taken forward due to protests by local people against land acquisition and fixing of alignment of the line, court cases filed against the project and non-cooperation from the State Government of Kerala.

This has badly delayed the execution of the above project and as a result, project cost has increased exponentially from ₹550 crore in 1997 to ₹1566 crore (including land cost of ₹719 crore) in 2011 and further, ₹2,815 crore (including land cost of ₹965 crore) in 2017.

As taking forward of this project showing 512% increase in project cost solely with Railway Funds was not possible, Railway had requested Government of Kerala vide letters dated 06.09.2011, 22.12.2011, and 08.10.2012 to share atleast 50% cost of the project.

Government of Kerala vide their letter dated 27.11.2015 agreed to share 50% cost of the project. Government of Kerala had also identified this project for execution under Joint Venture Scheme with Ministry of Railways and therefor, an MoU was also signed on 01.09.2016. Unfortunately, within a year, the State Government vide letter dated 15.11.2016 withdrew their own consent to share 50% cost of the project. This sudden change in policy was surprising and against the interest of developing Railways in Kerala, and brought into

question the State Government's commitment to this important project.

However, given the public demand, Railways again conducted detailed deliberations on the feasibility of taking forward this project vis-à-vis the availability of funds. Due to significant deficit, it was again decided by Railways in December, 2017 that the project should be undertaken on cost sharing basis.

Government of Kerala was again requested vide letters dated 06.02.2018 and 01.03.2018 for their consent to share atleast 50% cost of the project for the benefit of the State. There has been no positive response to this offer.

As the State Government has withdrawn its own previously sanctioned consent to share 50% cost of the project and is not cooperating in resolving the various obstructions, Railways has decided to freeze further expenditure on this project temporarily, and keep execution of works in abeyance, in September, 2019.

Therefore, Ministry of Railway vide letter No. 93/W-I/Survey/SR/11 dated 11.01.2020 advised Government of Kerala that it is not feasible for Railways in taking the project forward solely with Railway funds, and therefore, State Government of Kerala was again requested to share in the development of Railway network in the State. This will help Railways to provide the much required rail link for the travelling needs of local people and pilgrims to the Holy Shrine.

Budget Allocation (for the projects falling fully/partly in the State of Kerala)

Average annual Budget Allocation for Infrastructure & Safety works, falling fully/partly in State of Kerala, has increased to ₹950 crore, during 2014-19, from ₹372 crore (during 2009-14). Thus, the average annual budget allocation for 2014-19 is 155% more than average annual Budget allocation during 2009-14.

Total Budget Estimate (BE) outlay for Infrastructure and Safety works, falling fully/partly in State of Kerala, in 2019-2020 is ₹667 crore, which is 79% more than the average annual Budget outlay of 2009-14.

Commissioning of Projects (falling fully/partly in State of Kerala)

During 2009-14, 53 Km (7 Km New line, 10 Km Gauge conversion and 36 Km Doubling) projects, falling fully/partly in State of Kerala have been commissioned at an average rate of 11 Km per year.

During 2014-19, 89 Km (29 Km Gauge conversion and 60 Km Doubling) projects, falling fully/partly in State of Kerala have been commissioned at an average rate of 18 Km per year, which is 68% more commissioning than during 2009-14.

The completion of any Railway project depends on various factors like quick land acquisition by State Government, forest clearance by officials of forest department, shifting of infringing utilities (both underground and over ground), statutory clearances from various authorities, geological and topographical conditions of

area, law and order situation in the area of project site, number of working months in a year for particular project site due to climatic conditions, encountering unforeseen conditions like earthquake, flooding, excessive rains, strikes of labour, orders of Hon'ble Courts, situation and conditions of working agencies/contractors etc. All these factors vary from project to project and site to site and affect the completion time and cost of the project, which is finally worked out at the completion stage. Therefore, confirmed time line for completion of project cannot be ascertained at this stage.
